

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

July 31, 1961

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Minutes of Meeting of Inter-Departmental Coordinating Group on Berlin, July 26, 1961, 5:15 p.m.

Present: The President, the Secretary of State, Mr. Dean Acheson, Mr. Kohler, Mr. Nitze, Under Secretary Fowler, Mr. Hillenbrandt, Mr. Owen, Mr. Bundy.

The President opened the meeting by asking about progress on our negotiating position. The Secretary responded saying that timing was a major problem. Should we propose a meeting before the 22nd Congress? The Germans might not approve, and he thought the topic should be one for discussion in the Paris working sessions.

The Secretary asked if Mr. Acheson had supplementary comments. Mr. Acheson said the problem was tough. He would advise against calling a peace conference, since that would bring too many countries into the act. He also believed that it would be wrong at this stage to go to the United Nations.

Mr. Acheson believed that the outlines of any proposal would amount to a dressed-up form of the status quo, that such a dressed-up status quo might eventually include a four-nation agreement that they are not going to fight over Berlin, perhaps endorsed by NATO and by the members of the Warsaw Pact. (This endorsement would give a certain indirect role to the DDR.) At a later stage in the negotiations, Mr. Acheson said later, we might go a little further-- (1) there could be a discouragement of movements of population as distinct from acts of genuine political refuge; (2) there might be new trade arrangements; (3) we might give assurances on the Oder-Neisse boundary.



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In further discussion of timing, the Secretary and Mr. Acheson agreed that sometime after the German election but before the 22nd Congress, the United States should propose a conference to convene after the 22nd Congress.

[REDACTED]

The Department is also completing its White Paper on Berlin. The President asked again about a plebiscite in West Berlin, and the Secretary of State said the matter was under discussion in the Department of State.

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Discussion then turned to the "paper stamping" issue. Mr. Kohler presented the elements of the argument developed in this memorandum on the subject. The President indicated his own preference for the opposite position, stated in Mr. Acheson's memorandum (attached). Mr. Nitze indicated that the Defense Department preferred Mr. Acheson's position, on the practical ground that it allowed for a

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until the fall of 195 , when Mr. Dulles ch

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later decision on military action. It emerged from discussion that Mr. Acheson's recommendation is very close to to the actual position of the U.S. in 1959 (a point which will be checked further). In Mr. Acheson's view, we should simply insist that there be no change in present procedures. We could hold to this line sharply, but under the procedures currently approved and supported by Mr. Kohler we should be making a change, in refusing to accept an act of stamping which we had accepted before. Yet we should be doing this for a reason that we already admitted as invalid back in until 1959. Mr. Kohler later remarked that after all the fundamental change here is the Soviet withdrawal from participation in the four-power occupation, but Mr. Acheson's argument won the President's approval. Upon inquiry, the President was informed that the act of paper stamping is not in fact an act of approval, but rather one of bureaucratic registration of times of entry and departure, and on this understanding he thought that it would not make sense for us to sustain a position of refusing to permit such stamping.

Mr. Acheson believed that if this new U.S. position were made clear in advance, there would be no question of a concession and the earlier position would simply disappear. Both he and Mr. Nitze were sure that the United Kingdom would not hold to the current position, and the President agreed that we could not press the British on this point.

The moment of decision will come during the meeting of the Foreign Secretaries.

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The decision, then, was to change the current United States position, in the course of appropriately managed diplomatic discussions, terminating in the meeting of the Foreign Secretaries; the new decision would be allowed to become public, or at least known to the Soviets,

[REDACTED]

McGeorge Bundy

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